

Epstein-Barr Virus (Infectious Disease and Therapy)

**Alex Tselis and
Hal B. Jenson, editors**

**Informa Healthcare,
New York, New York 2006
ISBN: 0824754255
Pages: 436; Price US \$189.95**

Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) was the first recognized human tumor virus, but it is not the causative agent for the tumor in which it was discovered, Burkitt lymphoma. Common to all Burkitt lymphomas, endemic or sporadic, are distinctive chromosomal translocations that reactivate expression of the *c-myc* protooncogene and comprise the primary oncogenic mechanism.

EBV is at least a contributory cofactor in endemic Burkitt lymphoma, but the virus is detected in <20% of sporadic cases in the United States. EBV does cause infectious mononucleosis, hairy leukoplakia, and B-lymphoproliferative neoplasms in immunocompromised persons. In addition, the early and utterly consistent presence of monoclonal EBV episomes in nasopharyngeal carcinoma worldwide suggests a crucial role for the virus in that neoplasm. While tantalizing, associations with other diseases, well reviewed in this volume, are inconsistent and suggest that the virus may have another role beyond the etiologic, namely, by affecting the phenotype of already existing tumor cells and possibly propelling tumor progression.

This book is assembled mostly from a clinical perspective, and useful chapters on several of the EBV diseases bring together information not easily found elsewhere. Well-informed chapters on the virology and epidemiology of EBV infection are

also included. One of the editors (whose list of milestones displays the clinical emphasis of the book) has provided a nice historical summary.

As is usual with such compilations, the editors leave it to the contributors to speak for themselves, and the quality of the chapters is uneven. Some fall short in citation of primary sources or favor the author's view rather than one that weighs all the evidence. Withal it is a useful book, and having the less often discussed associations such as T-cell lymphomas and leiomyosarcomas assigned a place alongside authoritative chapters on the classic associations, nasopharyngeal carcinoma and Burkitt lymphoma, is convenient. The volume ends with a chapter on an EBV vaccine, which remains elusive after many years. In contrast, the penultimate chapter includes a brief summary of some successes with adoptive immunotherapy for posttransplant lymphoproliferative disease, which is generally refractory to conventional treatment. This volume is worth having for the cross-section of knowledge and developments in the EBV field it presents.

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The Power of Plagues

Irwin W. Sherman

**ASM Press, Washington, DC, 2006
ISBN: 1555813569
Pages: 442; Price: US \$39.95**

The purpose of this book is to make the science of epidemic diseases accessible and understandable; to guide the general reader through the maze of contagious diseases, their past importance, the means by which we came to understand them, and how they may affect our future. This commentary on general and disease-specific concerns covers the nature of plagues; plagues, the price of being sedentary (an evolutionary view); 6 plagues of antiquity (urinary schistosomiasis, the plague of Athens, malaria in Rome, the Antonine plague, the plagues of Cyprian and Justinian); bubonic plague; AIDS (including a history of virology and an account of leukocyte function); typhus; malaria (plus an explanation of sickle cell disease and genetics); cholera; smallpox; preventing plagues (the immune system, with a coda on vaccine development); the plague protectors (antiseptics and antimicrobial drugs); syphilis; tuberculosis; leprosy; 6 plagues of Africa (sleeping sickness, river blindness, guinea worm, yellow fever, malaria, and hookworm) with the history of exploration and exploitation of this continent; plagues without germs (pellagra, beriberi, scurvy, and rickets); and emerging plagues (rodent-borne, West Nile virus, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and influenza). The text covers not only the geography, history, microbiology, and physiology of these infections but also their influence on plastic art, movies, literature, and music (with a special fondness for nursery rhymes).